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THE
Great End and Design
OF
Christianity :
IN A
SERMON
P R E A C H E D

By the Learned and Reverend
Z. CRADOCK D.D.
Late Provost of *Eaton College*.

L O N D O N :
Printed for Sam. Crouch at the Corner of Popes-Head
Alley over-against the Royal Exchange, 1706.

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The PUBLISHER to the READER.

THE Excellency of the following Discourse, and its Agreeableness to that which is already extant of this Reverend Author's, would no doubt be sufficient to satisfy the Inquisitive, that this was his own Production, were there no other Account given of it.

Yet for farther satisfaction, the Reader may please to know, that the Person from whom I had the Copy, hath had it several Years by him, and assures me the Author gave it to a Friend of his, who desired it of him after he had heard him preach it; and I have so good Authority for the Truth of it, as leaves no doubt of its being genuine, which I hope will apologize to the Relations of the Learned Author's for my Publication of it, especially considering how conducive such a Practical Discourse will be to the benefit of the Publick.

Printed

THE THREE SERMONS

Printed for Sam. Crouch;

A Sermon before the Lord Mayor, and Aldermen at
Guild-Hall Chappel, on Good Friday March 29.
1689, on the 1 Cor. 6. & 20th Verse.

A Sermon before the King at Belfast in Ireland, the 14th
of June 1690, on Hob. 11th, former Part of the 33d
Verse.

A Sermon before the King and Queen at White-hall,
28th of December 1690, on the 1st St. John, Chapter 5,
the latter part of the 3d Verse.

All by Geo. Royse D.D. Dean of Bristol, Provost of
Oriel College in Oxon, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her
Majesty.

The great End of Christianity.

I T I M. I. 5.

*Now the End of the Commandment
is Charity.*

TH E Gospel at the first was published with such clear Demonstrations of the Spirit and Power of God, that Multitudes of all Sects and Nations were constrain'd to the acknowledgment of its Truth; many of whom, like *Simon Magus*, remain'd still in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bonds of Iniquity: They could not oppose the Divine Authority of the Doctrines, and yet were unwilling to resign up their Worldly Interests to the Practice of them; from whence proceeded the first depraving of Christianity. Such Men would make it a meer Speculation, or an obscure Mystery, that afforded Matter of perpetual wrangling and dispute about the sense of it: They would mix it with Jewish and Heathenish Rites, and reconcile it to those Doctrines and Usages which it came on purpose to abolish: They would confound it with quite contrary Principles, and so deprive it of all force and effect upon the Conscience, that it might signify as little to the Reformation of the World, as corrupted Judaism, or the Superstition of the Gentiles. Thus some of the Disciples and Instruments

The great End and Design

of the Devil obstructed the efficacy of the Gospel more by professing it, than the rest that were open Enemies, could by the Persecution of it ; of which malicious Practice St. Paul warns *Timothy* in the beginning of this Chapter, and commands him to use his Authority for the Preservation of the Evangelical Doctrine pure and intire, to charge some μηδέ γεννακά λέγειν, that they preach no other Doctrine, V. 3. not to give heed to Fables and endless Genealogies, which minister Questions rather than edifying, which is in Faith, V. 4. And he furnishes him with a plain Argument in the Text for the confutation of all such Teachers, taken from the main End and Design of the Gospel. (for that must be the Meaning of the ημερησια, or Commandment) which End was not any sublime Speculation, much less vain and impertinent Jangling, but the sincere Love of God, and of one another : *For the End of the Commandment is Charity.*

We need enquire no farther into the Context ; for the Words are an entire Proposition, which may be explain'd and proved by these two Considerations.

- I. Of the Nature of the Commandment or Gospel, and how apt a Means it is to beget the Habit and Grace of Charity.
- II. Of the Nature of Charity, how fit and worthy this is to be the End of the Commandment or Gospel ; each of which singly, but especially both together, will abundantly confirm the Proposition in the Text, that Charity is the End of the Commandment.

To

of Christianity, on I Tim. 1. 5 3

To begin with the Consideration of the Nature of the Commandment, and how apt a means it is to beget the Habit and Grace of Charity: And that I may not exceed in so copious an Argument, I will prove briefly these Three Conclusions.

1. That by the Representations in the Gospel of the Divine Nature and Attributes, we are most effectually persuaded and assisted to the Love of God.

2. That by Life and Immortality, which the Gospel brought to light, and proposed to Mankind as their chief Good and last End, the great Obstructions of Charity among Men are removed.

3. That by all the Precepts and Institutions of the Gospel, we are either assisted in the Acquisition of this Grace of Charity, or directed to those Actions, which are the most genuine and sincere Expressions of it.

1. First, that by the Representations in the Gospel of the Divine Nature and Attributes, we are most effectually persuaded, and assisted to the Love of God.

Our Affections are not so at our own dispose, as to determine them to what we will: Our Love and Hatred, Hope and Fear, are so by Nature directed to their proper Objects, that it is not in our power to love Evil, or hate Good, to fear Happiness, or hope for a Calamity; and therefore when we are commanded to love God with all our hearts, the Knowledge of his Goodness is necessary, or else the Object and Cause of Love is taken away, and the Command will be found impossible to be obeyed.

Wherefore the Foundation of this excellent Virtue must necessarily be laid in such a Belief concerning God, as may make him the proper Object of our Love.

And accordingly we have him described in this Commandment as a Lovet of Souls, as preventing us with his Grace, and loading us with his Benefits, as full of Pity and Compassion, abounding in Goodness and Truth, inviting the most Obstinate to Repentance by much Long-suffering and Forbearance; slow to Anger, and apt to pardon, as providing a Ransom and Satisfaction for himself, that to us the Forgiveness might be free, as careful of the Affairs of Mankind, and disposing all Events to the Benefit of the Good, and the Conversion of the Wicked, that they may be saved from the Wrath to come. If after all this it be found very hard to love God with a fervent Affection, because he is invisible and incomprehensible, and we have no positive Conceptions of his Essence, but think and speak of him by Negations only; which improper way of understanding is more apt to possess us with Wonder and Amazement, than Love and Delight, because our Imagination, (the powerful Governor of our Affections) can form no Shape or Similitude of the Being to which these Attributes belong. To help our Infirmitie in this case, God was manifest in the Flesh; and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory, as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. The Pattern of the Divine Goodnes was exposed to view in the Man Christ Jesus; and we are furnished with an Object of Love and Adoration suitable to our Nature, where

where our Imagination hath room and scope enough, without bordering upon Idolatry, to excite and raise our dull Minds, by representing to us the Son of God as a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, as crucified before our Eyes ; as bearing the Chastisement of our Peace, that by his Stripes we might be healed ; as demonstrating in all his Actions a most gracious and merciful Disposition, an unwearied Diligence in doing good, and procuring the Happiness and Salvation of Men. That great Obligations to the Love of God, arising from the knowledge of his Nature, are the peculiar Blessings of the Gospel, our Saviour himself teacheth : *No Man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son hath revealed him.* I confess the Reason of Men awaken'd by serious Consideration, and not perverted by Prejudice or false Religion, may arrive at strong Conjectures of the Goodness of God ; but the considering part of Mankind is very small, and how far short the Belief of God's Goodness falls of the universal Knowledge of his Being and Power, we may be informed by the Histories of all Nations and Religions. *The invisible things of God are seen to all Men by the things that are made, i. e. his eternal Power and Godhead : The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handi-work.* But this Knowledge of Almighty Power and Sovereignty is apt to produce Reverence and Fear only, and may leave Men in a fatal Doubtfulness of God's Mercy, and the Goodness of his Nature ; which is the only account to be given of many cruel Superstitious Rites common to all Nations. Why did the Priests of Baal cut their Flesh, and the Idolatrous

Iatrous Jews pass their Children through the Fire to Moloch, and the Romans, instructed from the Books of the Sybils, bury two Greeks and two Gauls alive after the Battle of Cannæ, and the Carthaginians sacrifice the Flower of their Noble Youth when their City was besieged? Why do the Mahometan Priests (and that of the most esteemed Order) gash and gore themselves, and the Votaries of Mecca burn their Eyes out, and the wild Indians, and some barbarous Nations of America, offer up daily Sacrifices of Men (not their Enemies, but their Neighbours and Children) and make their Altars reek every Morning with Human Blood, and furnish their Shambles out of the Temple with Man's Flesh? Why do some Christians (who have adopted too many of the Heathen Superstitions into the Family of Christ) macerate and torment themselves, mortify the Flesh, not in the moral, but in the literal sense, and this not as a Discipline only, and thereby to govern with more advantage their Appetites and Passions (for this Reason and Experience will allow to be an approved Method of Virtue) but for meer Satisfaction to God, with which he is pleased for its own sake, without any further design; and therefore will remit no part of this Debt of Pain and Sorrow which we owe him, but it must be paid here, or with great Usury and Increase in Purgatory? How come many sincere and honest Minds, disposed to all Virtue, but abused with wretched Impostures, to be affrighted with continual Dreads of God's Hatred, without reflecting upon any notorious Guilt of their own as the Cause of it, nor assigning any other reason, than because it pleaseth him

Him to make many the Objects of his Displeasure, and the everlasting Monuments of his Almighty Fury? From which dreadful Jealousy it's no wonder if blasphemous Thoughts haunt them like Apparitions, and possess them like evil Spirits, which no Charm or Exorcism can cast out. How could all this happen, and the World be overspread with Superstitions so near a kin, and that without learning them (in most of the Examples) one Nation from another; if after the necessary acknowledgment of God's Power, which the Frame of the World teaches, the greatest part of Men were not inclined to suspect, that Rigour, and almost implacable Severity, is the prevailing Inclination of his Nature, a Suspicion that will easily lead men to Flattery and Hypocrisy, but never to the sincere Love of God; the Causes which produce that Grace, cast out this fervile Fear, and instruct us in the Worship and Obedience of God from a better Principle of the Spirit of Love and Power, and a sound Mind.

Thus having proved, that this Commandment, and this alone, gives such a clear and certain account of the Divine Nature and Attributes, as may most effectually persuade us to the Love of God, I come now to the second Conclusion, viz. That by the Life and Immortality which the Gospel brought to light, and proposed to Mankind as their chief Good and last End, the great Obstructions of Charity among Men are removed.

Twould be too long a Digression to examin the difference betwixt the probability that the Soul was immortal, contended for by some Philosophers, or a more certain Belief of another Life found among the

the *Jews*, and the so clear and plain Declaration of it in the *Gospel*, that it seems almost its only design to assure the World of a Resurrection from the Dead, and a Life to come. Thus St. *Paul* preached at *Athens* *Jesus* and the Resurrection, when they accused him for setting forth strange Gods, and St. *Matthias* was chosen to be with the rest of the Apostles, a Witness of our Saviour's Resurrection, the Pledge and Security of ours; and St. *Paul* sums up that Faith by which we must be saved, in those few Articles, how that *Christ died for our Sins, and was buried, and rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures*: So that notwithstanding any Conjecture or Belief in the World before, yet in regard of the clear Manifestation, and universal Publication, and more evident Proof, the Scripture faith with good reason, that *Life and Immortality was brought to light by the Gospel*: The Influence of which upon the Grace of Charity is too plain to need many Words.

The difference between Good and Evil is fixt and determin'd by our last End; for all that we esteem good, is either chosen for it self, and the immediate Satisfaction it affords in the Enjoyment of it, and such Good hath the Nature of an End; or else it's chosen to procure that Satisfaction, and such Good hath the Nature of a Means to that End. The greater part live by the Principle and Belief of *Epicurus*, not knowing (or which is all one) not considering the relation which this Life hath to another. Here is all the Happiness they look for, and then it's no wonder to see the daily Tragedies acted by Covetousness, Malice, Ambition and Envy: For he
that

that expects not another Life, will make the best of this, he will eat and drink, because to morrow he must die, and die for ever; he will endeavour to take his fill of all the Content that Wealth, Honour and Pleasure can promise, but not give: For this is his Portion, and his Lot is this; and in pursuance of that mistaken Felicity which the World flatters him with, he will envy his Neighbour, and hate his Enemy, and prosecute his Revenge, and fulfil his Lust; he will oppress the Poor, and vex the Righteous, and make his Power and Strength to be the Law of Justice. He can never rise higher than the meer Counterfeit of Goodness, because the Practice would hinder him from making those large Provisions for the Flesh, which he accounts the only Art and Method of true Happiness. What can move him to be liberal, but the hope of a good Bargain, that his Kindness may be returned with Usury? What can persuade him to conceal his too deep sense of those Injuries which he cannot forgive, but that he is too weak to revenge them? What can constrain him to be just, but the Fear of Laws, which if they may be avoided by Fraud or Power, there is no Bond can hold him, who thinks himself born at all Adventures, his Soul to be nothing but the Breath of his Nostrils, or the Beating of his Heart. The designing of the good things of this Life as our last End, is the Wisdom that is earthly, sensual, devilish, full of confusion, and every evil Work; this fills the World with the Fruits of the Flesh, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Sedition, Envying, Murder, Drunkenness, Revelling.

2. The Author of the Book of *Wisdom* gives a clear account of the whole matter, both of the Effects and the Cause, describing in several Chapters the Nature and Behaviour of those Idolaters, who having no Sense of the True God, nor Belief of the World to come, their Conscience was unable to oblige them either to Religion or Justice. For in as much as their Trust is in Idols, which have no Life, tho' they swear falsely, they look not to be hurt, neither discerning the Wages of Unrighteousness, nor the Reward of blameless Souls, they err in their Knowledge of God, and live in a great War of Ignorance ; so that there reigns in the World Blood, Manslaughter, Theft, Disimulation, Corruption, Unfaithfulness, Tumults, Perjury, disquieting of good Men, forgetfulness of good turns, Adultery, Shamelessness, Uncleanness : They are either mad when they are merry, or Prophecy lies, or live unjustly, or lightly forswear themselves. They count our Life here a Pastime, a Market for Gain ; they say we must be getting every way, tho by evil means ; of all which this is the only reason, that their Hope is more vile than Earth. They know not their Maker, he who inspired into them an active Soul, and breathed in a living Spirit.

Thus while Mens Hopes are in this Life only, the Law of Charity can never find Obedience. So reasonable and just is that Prayer of David, *Deliver my Soul, O Lord, from the wicked Men of this World, who have their portion in this Life.*

But when the Proposal of a better End hath furnish'd us with another Reason for all our Actions, when

when it hath called us to the pursuit of true and everlasting Happiness, withdrawn our Affections from a fond Dotage upon specious gaudy Trifles ; when it hath taught us the Vanity of the World better than Experience could teach *Solomon* himself ; when it hath dried up the Root of those Evils which afflict the Life of Man, and fill up the whole extent and compass of it with Miseries and Sorrows ; then Charity will be an easy Precept, a Light will spring forth to lead us in the ways of Righteousness and Peace, and the Passions of the Soul (so full of Darkness and Confusion before) will fall of themselves into due order, and the Love of God, who hath ordain'd us to so excellent an end, will diffuse it self into all our Actions, and descend from him in a regular and just Subordination upon his Creatures. For the designing the Happiness of another Life, as our last End, is the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy. The pursuit of this End will cool the immoderate Fervour of Desire, it will abate the Thirst of Covetousness, asswage the Swelling of Pride, sweeten the Sharpness of Envy, quench the Fire of Contention, and lessen the Esteem of the World, with all its Pomp and Vanities. If this were the general scope and aim of Mankind, their Interests would no longer clash and interfere, they would be reduced to the original Innocence and Simplicity of Nature ; there would be no confounding Care to vex the Mind, no murmuring or repining in the Family, no Cries or Complainings in the

Streets ; instead of Oppression and Cruelty, of Pride and Envy, of Hatred and Revenge, we should see nothing but Justice, Mercy, Humility and Devotion. For by the hopes of that future Life which the Gospel proposes as our chief Good and last End, the great Obstructions of Charity among Men would be quite removed : And so, I pass on to the third and last Conclusion.

3. That by all the Precepts and Institutions in the Gospel, we are either assisted in the Acquisition of this Grace of Charity, or directed to those Actions which are the most genuine and sincere Expressions of it. To confine my Discourse of this matter within a few Instances : Nothing could be more available to the acquisition and improvement of this excellent Grace, than the Precept of Repentance, and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, from the former of which it derives its first Conception, and Principles of Life, and from the latter a great deal of Nourishment and Growth. Repentance is the acknowledgment of God's Authority, and the Equity of his Laws, and the Submission of ourselves to him anew with Sorrow and Shame, and Resolutions and Vows of better Obedience. The first Motive to it is the Fear of Punishment and Hope of Pardon, and the Soul and Spirit of it is the Sense of our own Unworthiness, and that excellent Goodness against which we have offended, wherein every Argument by which our Folly in departing from God is aggravated, doth with a mighty force persuade and oblige us to love him ; it purgeth our Minds from those evil Affections, which set

set us at variance and contention with our Neighbour, and will give us no assurance of being reconciled to God till we have satisfied our injured Brother, and repaired as far as we can the Breaches that we have made in his Fortunes by Injustice, or in his Reputation by Calumny and Detraction. And then it obligeth us to love him, as the only true Demonstration of our Love to God, and to kill the Root of Hatred; that no Fruit may ever grow thereon; it admits us not to the hope of Forgiveness, but upon the indispensable Condition of loving our Enemies, which how hard and grievous soever it may seem, yet no Commutation will be allowed for this Duty, tho' our Vows be never so large, and our Discipline severer than an Hermits, and our Alms as profuse as the squandering of a Prodigal, and our Sorrows for Sin should exceed the intolerable Anguish, Distraction and Despair of the fondest Mother for the loss of her only Child. And when thus the Seed of Charity is sown in our Hearts by true Repentance, what Growth, Ripeness and Increase doth it receive from the holy Eucharist? If there were nothing in this Institution, but the moral effect of the Preparations and Dispositions of a worthy Receiver, yet even that Effect would be due to the Institution it self; for that which is the cause of all those Dispositions and Preparations, is the Cause of all that they produce. If we have any part in the Sacrifice of Christ, we must not abstain from the Altar, the Representation of it; and yet we must not presume to snatch any thing from thence with unhallowed Hands, nor profane the Mystery of our Union with Christ, by bringing Hearts full of

of Malice to the Sacrament of Love, nor dare to partake of this solemn remembrance of the Lord's Death till he come, without some degree of that Devotion which the serious thoughts of that Truth will raise ; and such hatred of all Sin, as that which crucify'd the Lord of Life, deserves ; and such Love to all Men, as the great Example of dying for us while we were yet Enemies, may justly provoke us to. But beside all this, we are to expect an Addition of Strength to every Virtue ; but Charity more especially, the Mother of them all, by an immediate Influence of the Power and Spirit of God descending upon the worthy Receiver, by which this Holy Mystery becomes one of the widest and deepest Channels of the Divine Grace, in which the Streams flow that daily refresh the City of God.

And here I may conclude the first Consideration of the nature of this Commandment, and how apt it is to beget the Habit and Grace of Charity : For how the rest of the Precepts direct us to those Actions which are the most genuine and sincere Expressions of it, will farther appear by the second Consideration.

III. Of the Nature of Charity, how fit and worthy it is to be the end of this Commandment.

Tho' there be a Connection of all Virtue, and dependance one upon another by a nearer and remoter consequence, yet in many of them it is not easy to be discerned. Some are of a more general Nature and Operation, and others confin'd to a narrower

narrower compass; but the Influence of Charity upon them all is as visible as the dependance of an Effect upon its immediate Cause. The Passion of Love is the Fountain of all the rest, from whence Desire and Loathing, Pleasure and Pain, Joy and Grief, Hope and Despair, Anger and Fear, Courage and Faintness of Heart, derive their Being and Degrees, and various Applications. The Grace of Charity is nothing else but the Passion of Love disposed and ordered aright, and that with such constancy and stedfastness, as proceeds both from infused and acquired Habits. Now the Government of those Passions, the restraining of them within due bounds, and the determination of them to right Objects, being the main Business of Virtue, Charity by a necessary consequence will be found as well the Parent of all the Virtues, as Love is of all the Passions. From hence Prudence and Temperance, Justice and Fortitude, with all their Train and Retinue, derive themselves: It is the Bond of Perfection, and the fulfilling of the whole Law, and therefore fit and worthy to be the End of it, which may be made clear and evident by a brief Explication of these three Propositions.

1. That from the Habit and Grace of Charity flows the most easy and acceptable Performance to God and Man.
2. That without it there's no security or likelihood of Perseverance.
3. That this Grace is not only a Condition of Salvation, as all others are, but it is the immediate Preparation and Disposition of the Soul for the Happiness of Heaven.

1. From

1. From the Habit and Grace of Charity flows the most easy and acceptable performance of all our Duties to God and Man. I will not presume to determine that hard Question, Whether Contrition, as it is commonly distinguished from Attrition, be a necessary part of that Repentance which will be accepted of God? It's very possible for a Man who yet loves the World too well, and accounts Religion a hard Service, and would be glad of permission to lead a sensual Life with security, to be moved by the smartness of a present Calamity, or the Fear of future Temporal Judgments, to very sorrowful Reflections upon his past Sins, and serious Resolutions to amend his Life: Much more may the Terrors of Conscience and the Fear of Damnation, affright him for a time from the Commission of Sin, and the fulfilling of his Lusts. This is acknowledged to be the usual beginning of Repentance, and if Fear were not a Motive of excellent use for the Conversion of wicked Men, it would not have been one of the principal Topicks of St. Paul's Rhetorick, as himself assures us that it was: *Knowing therefore the Terrors of the Lord, we persuade Men.* But notwithstanding the Question is very difficult, and the Difficulty arises from the nature of all such Changes where the Extreams are so opposite, and all the mean way partakes more or less, every part differently, of both the opposite Extreams. Who can assign the dividing Moment betwixt the Day and the Night, or draw a Line on the Surface of a River, that shall exactly part the fresh and the brackish Waters? Who can tell the instant of Conception, or when the Living Soul is inspired,

inspired, or when the yet imperfect Child becomes indued with Sense, and what is the first Act of Reason and Understanding. In all things of this nature the difference is best discerned at a distance, and so it is in Repentance, whatever the first Motive be, if we put no Obstructions in his way, the Divine Spirit will infuse into our Souls the Grace of Charity, and shed the Love of God abroad in our Hearts, and we shall more easily discern the Progress we have made in Repentance then, the precise time when it began, and may receive abundant Satisfaction to our selves, without being so skilful as to tell exactly the highest degree that falls short, or the lowest that finds acceptance : And yet it is very severe to account the attrite Sinner as remaining yet in a State of Reprobation, especially since the Scripture never draws the evidence of our acceptance with God from the Principle or Motive to Repentance; but from the Effects and Fruits of it, from confessing and forsaking of our Sins, from ceasing to do evil and learning to do well; which may be the Fruits of a Repentance proceeding from Fear only : And he in whom the beginning is found, may die before he arrives at a higher Principle of the Love of God, or the Love of Righteousness ; but he that in the course of his Obedience to God hath never any better Cause or Motive to Care and Diligence than the Fear of Punishment, will offer himself unto God a lame and imperfect Sacrifice ; he will not serve him with the Duty of a Son, but the unwilling Submission of a Slave ; and his yet unmortified Lusts and Passions will bribe his Understanding, if they can, to allow of the Exchange of Religion

Religion for Hypocrisy : However he will be always liable to such vain Scruples and perverse Mistakes, as a dozed and over-awed Mind is subject to, when the continual risings of the Mists of Fears incompass the Light of the Soul with a Cloud, and deprive it of the Succours of Reason.

But if the Heavenly Gift of Charity drive away that evil Spirit of Bondage; his Thoughts will be enlarged, and his Understanding enlighten'd, as by the Inspiration of God, and that crazy diseased Temper of Soul will suddenly be converted to the Strength and Vigour of Health with such success and speed, as attended our Saviour's Almighty Word, when he caused the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, and the Dead to be raised up to Life.

The Love of God will cause him to yield a cheerful Obedience, and to account the Service of his Maker a perfect Freedom ; it will inspire his Prayers with a mighty Fervour, and direct him to such Petitions as are fit to be made to the best and most perfect Being ; it will make him approach to God with boldness and confidence, and yet not without reverence and a godly fear : It will teach him the Art of reconciling Importance and Lively Hope with humble Submission and Resignation to God ; for it will possess him with a full assurance of that Wisdom, which knows better than he, what satisfaction is fit to be given to his Desires, and of that Bounty which will deny nothing that is needful and convenient ; and when other Men are full of care and perplexity, and doubtful of all Events, it will secure him against the fear of evil Tidings, fix his Heart to trust in the Lord : And tho' he cannot always,

always resolve the Riddles of Providence, the unequal Distribution of Good and Evil in this Life; yet that Belief concerning God which is the Cause of his Love to him, will give him a full assurance, that for all the Calamities of good Men there is a just reason, and will be an exceeding Recompence, and he need inquire no farther; for the Counsel and Wisdom of God cannot be traced but by a Wisdom as great as his: and therefore the Love of God will teach him to admire the unsearchable Riches of his Wisdom, to depend securely on his Mercy and Truth, and tobethink himself daily with infinite Satisfaction and unsigned Joy, that all his Affairs are in the hands of Almighty Wisdom and Goodness, and that whatever Men design, there is no Change can happen without the Permission and Operation of God.

But the Praises of God, which is all that our Poverty can return for his innumerable Mercies, seem to be the most genuine and proper Effect of this Grace of Charity, as the Prophet David teaches us: *I will love the Lord always, and his Praise shall ever be in my Mouth.* Psalms and devout Hymns may help to raise and express our Thankfulness to our Maker and daily Benefactor; but nothing can animate our Thanksgivings with that Life which the Love of God will breathe into them: It will make it our chieftest Delight to think of his infinite Perfections, to be confounded with Wonder and Astonishment, and to be always gazing at the Brightness of his Glory: It will ravish us into frequent Ecstasies and Raptures, and cause us to be sometimes transport, to faint and languish under such a mighty

Sense, as all the Art and Power of Speech can never express: This Heavenly Gift will fill our Minds with Divine Consolations, and good Hope through Grace, and the Peace of God that passeth all Understanding, which all the unwilling Lapses of our Frailty shall never abate: For as long as we are not conscious to our selves of Malice, which is the contradiction of Charity, nor of such Negligence as may justly convict our Pretences to Love God, of Fiction and Hypocrisy; we shall see clearly through that perfect Love which casteth out Fear, the Forgiveness of all those Infirmities, and Imperfections, which are necessary to our Nature, and consistent with our Sincerity;

Thus doth our Love to God demonstrate it self in all the Acts of Piety, Reverence, and Devotion, of Hope, Confidence, and Thanksgiving; and our whole Duty to Man is but like several Fruits upon a Tree; for the Grafts are divers, but the Stock and Root is the same. All the Vertues belonging to Human Society are but the various Expressions of Charity to our Neighbour, according to the relation in which he stands: For Charity to our Superiors, is Respect; and to our Governors, Obedience; to our Acquaintance, Kindness; to our Friends, Fidelity; to our Benefactors, Gratitude; to our Inferiors, Condescension; to Strangers, Hospitality; to the Afflicted, Compassion; to the Poor, Liberality; and to our Enemies, Forgiveness. By our readiness in such Exercises of Virtue, the Growth and Strength of our Charity is perceived, and the bearing of the Heart is felt in every Pulse. And tho' we may look upon our selves

selves as obliged by Custom, Civility, or Interest, to some of these Virtues; yet without Charity, as the Life and Soul of them, they are but the dead Image and artificial Counterfeit of Virtue, Trees laden with waxen Fruit, which may deceive the Eye, but the Taste will soon discover it. Where this Grace is not the Motive and Guide of our Actions, all our Pretences to Goodness will betray themselves not to be the genuine Offspring of Sincerity, but the base Issue of Craft and Design, of Pride, Covetousness, Ambition, or Vain-glory, and an ugly Hue, the mark of their Parentage, will be upon them. Our Hospitality will be with grudging, and our Gifts without Simplicity; our Courtesy with Disimulation, and our Mercy without Cheerfulness. The best Laws can take little or no cognizance of abundance of Mischief by which Men are disquieted and injured every day: Sturtness and Ill-nature, Impudence and Immodesty, Disrespect to a Parent, and Unfaithfulness to a Benefactor, Lying and vain Boasting, Envy and Detraction, Wilfulness and the crafty Circumvention of Simplicity; and where the Laws have most Power, they can but punish the Sinner, when they could not prevent the Sin. But if Religion might prevail to impose upon us this Law of Charity, the Penalties ordain'd for the Unruly and Disobedient would be of small use, and every Man's well-guided Conscience would be his Law, the Generation of the World would be healthful, and there would be no Poysen of Death in them; the Lion would lie down with the Lamb, and the Wolf would eat Straw with the Ox, and the Earth would be blest with

with abundance of Peace, Justice would run down like Waters, and Righteousness like a mighty Stream.

So certainly would the Grace of Charity secure the performance of all Duties both to God and Man, which is the first Argument of its Worthiness and Fitness to be the main Scope and Design of the Gospel.

2. Without this Habit and Grace of Charity, there is no security, nor so much as a likelihood of Perseverance, whatever our Resolutions and Beginnings may promise. It was mentioned before, that Fear of Hell might be a prevailing Motive to Repentance, and might produce a present Resolution to obey the Commandments of God ; and that it is not safe to condemn even such Repentance, as utterly unacceptable of God's Acceptance : But if we stay there, and design to govern our Actions by no better a Principle than the Fear of Punishment, the Temptations to Apostacy will beset us round, and assault us every moment : We shall be distracted between Delight and Fear, between Pleasure and Shame, between Nature and Force, between God and Mammon ; and 'tis great odds but our Delight in Sin will prevail at last against the Fear of Punishment ; for the Inclinations of our Nature are always awake and active ; but the Watchfulness and Intencion of the Mind may be tired, and we shall more easily forget or confute our Fears, that are at a great distance, than deny the Satisfaction of our Desires that are present, and attempt our best settled Resolutions with a continual and pressing Importunity ; and therefore against such

such a powerful and watchful Enemy, we can never be secure by a mere Defence against his Assaults, we shall always be in danger till he be killed and destroyed, till the Old Man be mortified with his deceitful Lusts, and we endued not with new Resolutions only, but with new Inclinations, with a new Nature and another Spirit, which is nothing else but the Grace and Habit of Charity. And accordingly David accounts that as the reason of his constant and intire Obedience : *I have kept thy Commandments, and loved them exceedingly : O how love I thy Law ! It is my Meditation all the Day.* The Examples are but too many of Mens Apostacy, and turning to Folly from the most solemn Vows of Obedience to God, of their Beginnings in the Spirit, and Ending in the Flesh ; but such Men for the most part never had any true Relish or Savour of Religion, they were either overawed by a severe Education, or affrighted in a Sickness at the apprehension of approaching Death, or amazed and confounded at some great and sudden Adversity ; and when their Appetites were dulled, and the Taste of Pleasure lost by a Disease or Grief, they were at leisure to be devout, and perhaps found it the best Entertainment of themselves, till Health or the Forgetfulness of Sorrow should restore their old Inclinations and Appetites again, and then they were too weak to resist ; and the Strength of all their Vows to a present Temptation was but like Towe before the Fire ; the only Check was sothe Fear of the Divine Vengeance : But a Mind willing and prepared to Sin can quickly rid it self of such Fears, and the Devil will teach them to confute them by Infidelity,

delity or profane Security ; or if the Sense of another Life, and the Judgment to come, be so deeply imprinted, that it cannot be soon forgotten, he will furnish them with Arts of deluding themselves into the Satisfaction of their Lusts, by the specious Pretences of Superstition or Hypocrisy, Heresy or Schism. It is an easy thing for him that would rid himself of the Yoke and Bondage of the Law of God, to find out Cavils and Objections against it, and to gravel himself with every little difficulty ; and he may confirm himself by the Examples of abundance of licentious and atheistical Men, whom he will therefore believe to be Men of great Wit and Sagacity, the wisest and most discerning part of Mankind, because he loves their Opinions, and would gladly have a good Authority to justify him in the embracing of them.

And when a Man is thus partial against Religion, and desirous to have it confuted, every little Exception, every sarcastical and sharp Reflection upon it, every Similitude by which a Delusion may be represented, will be allowed for a strong and unanswerable Argument ; every Hebraism, unusual Phrase, every Proposition of Divine Truth which exceeds his Comprehension, every Declaration of the Divine Counsel which he discerns not the reason of, will be a clear demonstration that all is Forgery and a mere Scarecrow : That eternal Damnation may be a pretty Contrivance and ingenious Plot to keep the Multitude in awe and subjection, and so may be the Instrument of wise Men, but the Mistress and Governess of Fools only : That the Fears of Religion are but pannick Terrors, but Wizards and Mormoes

Momoes for Children to be affrighted with; and that the hopes of Religion are but Castles in the Air, vain and deceitful Promises of Happiness, with the fancy of which the miserable and discontented relieve themselves against the real Inconveniences of their present Condition. That therefore it is perfect Madness to forgoe the Pleasure of Sensuality, and real Interests and Concernments of this present Life for the hopes of a pleasing Dream, or the Fears and Jealousies of Ignorance and Superstition.

Others, who are not so wise to do wickedly, as to become Infidels first, that there may be nothing to make them afraid; yet if they have no sincere Love for God, and his Commandments become grievous to them, they can find a way of returning to their beloved Sins without danger, by flattering themselves with the hopes of repenting to better purpose in old Age, when their Temptations shall be fewer, and their Obedience to the Laws of God less painful: And neither Reason nor Experience will convince them of the Vanity and Folly of this Presumption, tho' a little Consideration would assure them, that Habits grow stronger by continuance, that the Fountain of Corruption will never dry up of it self, that the Appetites and Affections of Men may change indeed naturally; but it will be from one sinful Satisfaction to another, leaving them still under the same necessity, and a far greater difficulty of subduing their Lusts. That the Custom of sinning will darken the Understanding, debauch the Conscience, harden the Heart, and so take away the first Causes and Capacities of returning to God.

And beside all this, Experience would inform them, that Procrastination is a Malady seldom cur'd, that the Delays of Repentance are as usual in Old Age as in Youth, and (whether such Men grow scared and insensible by degrees, or are surprized by Death while they are still putting the evil Day far from them) for the most part end in final Impenitency.

But if the Fear of future Punishments hath too fast an hold upon the Conscience to be thus shaken off, there are Wiles and Devices of the Devil to cheat Men into Wickedness by Religion it self; he can direct all their Zeal to matter of Pomp and Shew, such as are apt to procure a great Fame and Reputation of Godliness, and leave them at large in those Matters where they may sin with most Satisfaction to themselves, and least open Scandal to the World. He can instruct them to build the Sepulchers of the dead Prophets, that with less suspicion of themselves they may persecute those that are alive: He can teach them to make their Prayers long with Absurdities and vain Repetitions, that they may not be scrupulous and squeamish in devouring Widows Houses: He can move them to an exact care and precision in tything Mint and Cummin, that they may with more security neglect Justice, Righteousness and Faith; and if any Attempt be made to discover this Partiality and Hypocrisy, by shewing that the moral Duties are of most weight and consequence, that tho' the lower Duties are to be done, yet the greater must not be left undone; he that would thus discover the Delusion and Deceit of their specious Pretences to Religion, would fare

fare among them as our Saviour did among the Pharisees; they would be full of Fury and Indignation, and brand him as a loote and prophane Man, a Destroyer of the Law, an Enemy to the Power of Godliness, and a Friend to Publicans and Sinners.

But if the Disguise of Hypocrisy put more restraint upon a Man (tho' but in little things, and trifles in comparison) than he is willing to endure, there is a way of Heresy which is smoother and broader than that; it is but calling the Fear of Hell, Bondage, a legal Spirit, that needless and sinful trouble of a Man unacquainted with the Gospel, and the magnifying and exalting Free Grace in the Justification of every Elect Sinner from all Eternity; and what need any farther trouble to procure that acceptance which we had with God before we were born? How injurious are they to the Gift of God, who would put Conditions upon that which is past, which is done and compleated, and that irrevocably, without any care or desire of ours? There remains nothing, but that we be persuaded to believe our own Election and Justification, not as necessary to obtain the Thing, but the Comfort of it only. And because such a Belief is unreasonable, and without ground, unless all Men were so elected and justified from Eternity, or he that believes he is in particular, assured of it by a Revelation from Heaven; this Objection, tho' impossible to be answer'd, may be slighted and contemned, as the Attempt of proud and corrupt Nature to exalt it self against Grace, as the Impudence of carnal Reason in disputing against God, as the Enmity of the natural Man to the things that are spiritually discern'd.

But nothing so effectually debauches those who are disposed to be serious and apprehensive of another Life, as the ordinary Impostures of Schism, whereby besides the complication of all the Mischiefs of Superstition and Hypocrisy, Men are inclined to estimate all Goodness and Truth according to the Humour of that Party to which they addict themselves ; to make the Confederacies and Combinations of a Faction the Fellowship of good People, and the Communion of Saints ; to pursue the matter in difference, tho' never small in it self, with so much eagerness, as if it were the one thing necessary to Salvation, and the only Characteristical Mark of the Children of God. From hence Government comes to be disorder'd, and the People fitted for Impressions of every seditious Incendiary, and the Obligations of natural Affection to be easily disregarded, the Father set against the Son, and the Brother against the Sister ; and Charity, which is the fulfilling of the Law, is esteemed Lukewarmness and Indifferency to all Opinions. The Schismatical Spirit will make you fast for Strife and Debate, and to smite with the Fist of Wickedness, without any check or controul of Conscience ; it will teach them to make Contumely and Disobedience a part of their Religion, to set God and their Rulers in opposition one to another, that they may fulfil the Lusts of Envy or Malice, Ambition or Revenge, and please themselves all the while with a conceit, that they are only zealous for God, and contending on his side with such as rise up against him ; it will embolden them to despise the wisest, and condemn the best Men as ignorant of the Mysteries

ries of God, and notwithstanding all their exactness in Legal or Moral Righteousness, are unacquainted with the true Life and Spirit of the Gospel, by which strange Presumption of themselves, and Prejudice against all but their own Party, they become most mischievous and incorrigible Apostates.

The Sum of the whole matter is this : Where the Love of God and a Delight in his Commandments is the Principle of Obedience, that Man's Faith is built upon a Rock, able to endure the Assauls of the fiercest Tempests ; but where a Man is over-awed only into an unwilling Submission to God's Law, 'tis a thousand to one but in some of the foremention'd ways he will return to the Commission of his former Sins, and become either an open Infidel, or a superstitious Hypocrite : For without the Habit and Grace of Charity, tho' we may be affrighted into a good Beginning, there's no Security, not so much as likelihood of Perseverance, which is the second Argument of its Worthiness and Fitness to be the main Scope and Design of the Gospel.

3. This Grace of Charity is not only a Condition of Salvation (as all others are) but it is the immediate Preparation and Disposition of the Soul for the Happiness of Heaven. All the Virtues of Justice and Prudence, Fortitude and Humility, Mortification of our inordinate Appetites and Desires, Faith, Hope, Patience, and Resignation to God, are but the Trials of our Obedience and Sincerity, which God requires as the Testimonies of our Love and Reverence, and as Virtues fit and proper for this

this State of Imperfection and Infirmity, in which we must approve our selves for the Kingdom of Heaven : But in a State of perfect Happiness, the Reason and Use of all these will cease, only Charity shall endure for ever, as that Habit of Soul in the Sincerity whereof true Holiness, and in the Perfection of which true Happiness doth consist. If we lived in expectation of a *Mahometan* Paradice, and our Reward was to be in the exquisite Satisfaction of Sense, then the Life of an *Epicure* would be the best preparation for it ; by the Use and Skill of corporeal Pleasure in this Life, we should learn to enjoy it in the next with a more perfect relish, and we need not be taught the Love of God to prepare us for green Pastures, flowry Meadows, sumptuous Banquets, and all the Entertainments the most effeminate Sensualist can fancy or desire. But the Scriptures give us such an account of the Joys of Heaven, as have no affinity with the Pleasures and Lusts of the Flesh, as bear no resemblance, but a direct contradiction to the Delights of Sense. This Body shall become spiritual and immortal, not liable to Sickness or Decay, and therefore not needing the daily reparation of Meat and Drink, or those other Provisions which this weak Estate requires : The just Men made perfect shall be as the Angels of God, and tho' we know but little of their Life and Happiness, yet thus far the Spirit of God represents the Employment and chief Delight both of the Angels and Saints, to consist in the Knowledge, Love and Praise of God, in giving Blessing, Honour and Glory to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever more.

The

The Beatifical Vision of God is not Beatifical as a mere Speculation or Knowledge, tho' of the most perfect Being, but as a necessary Cause of a passionate and unspeakable Love, in which Affection directed to the most worthy Object, raised to the highest degree, and maintained in that degree always without remisness or decay, all that we can imagine of perfect Happiness doth consist.

The Love of God then is the very formal Cause of the Happiness of Heaven, and the beatifical Vision is a remoter Cause, and the Foundation from whence that Love will eternally flow: By which we see how necessary it was for this Grace to be implanted in the Hearts of Men, since without it, as the immediate capacity of Salvation, Heaven it self could not make them happy.

And thus I have done with the second Consideration of the nature of Charity, how fit and worthy it is to be the End of this Commandment or Gospel. I will conclude all in the comprehensive Words of the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, where the greatest part of what I have been discoursing of seems to be briefly comprised, Ch. 6. *The true Desire of Wisdom is the Desire of Discipline, and the Care of Discipline is Love; and Love is the keeping of her Laws, and the giving heed unto her Laws is the assurance of Incorruption, and Incorruption maketh us near to God.*

Now to God the Father, &c.

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